

warning was to the right, who apparently are going to continue in their efforts to disrupt life in America and endanger the lives of fellow Americans and law enforcement officers.

We need to stand up as a nation and say, "Enough." Whatever your political strife, there is no room for extremism and violence in the exercise of a constitutional responsibility or right.

I wanted to make that as part of the RECORD as an opening statement.

### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, now, on another issue, this morning, I went on a radio show in Bloomington-Normal, IL, WJBC, Scott Miller. The topic de jour—no surprise—was the vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccines, and why so many people in that part of Central Illinois can't get access to vaccinations.

I listened to the frustration of people who called in to the announcer about waiting on the phone for hours, trying to get through, unable to make an appointment, and I called the Governor of Illinois, JB Pritzker, to ask him what was happening. He gave me some numbers in our part of the world, which probably reflect our country's status at the moment.

He said that we were receiving 120,000 first doses of COVID-19 vaccine each week—120,000 a week. We have approximately 10 million people eligible to be vaccinated in Illinois. Those under the age of 16 are excluded for reasons determined by medical professionals, so we start with 10 million. We anticipate that at least 50 percent are currently hoping to get a vaccine as quickly as a possible. So we have to get 5 million people vaccinated in our State with two doses. There are 10 million doses, and we are receiving 120,000 a week. Is it any wonder that the new President, Joe Biden, has spoken up that we need to obtain as quickly as possible new sources of COVID-19 vaccine in large numbers? I support that completely.

As part of his request for the American Rescue Plan, which has come before the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, in that request he spells out what he thinks are the priorities in this country, and I believe he is correct.

We talk about \$160 billion to provide the supplies, emergency response, testing, and workforce for our country to stop the spread of COVID-19. Could there be any higher priority?

There is \$170 billion for schools and higher education so they can safely reopen and operate. Any parent or grandparent knows how urgent that need is.

There is \$80 billion for paid leave. It includes 14 weeks of paid family medical leave through the end of September. Certainly, people need to have that option available either because of their own illness or an illness in the family.

Direct payments—already \$600 has gone out to many families in direct payments. Another \$1,400 per person

has been promised. That is included in the Biden proposal.

Unemployment insurance—we still are finding record numbers of people who are filing for unemployment; \$290 billion extends the current benefits and eligibility and a \$400 supplement per week until the end of September. Rental assistance, SNAP benefits, childcare, relief to families, such as the child tax credit—the list is lengthy, and I have read through it carefully.

Should we do it? There are some who argue: No, we don't need more stimulus. We have done all we need to do.

I have to disagree with that conclusion. The news this morning that was alluded to by the Democratic leader suggests that we are not out of the woods by a long shot when it comes to the state of the economy.

CNN reported this morning that the Donald Trump final economic report card could be very underwhelming.

[For example,] the U.S. gross domestic product, the broadest measure of economic activity, is forecast to have grown at an annualized rate of 4% between October and December [of last year].

In a normal year, that would be [cause for celebration]—an A+. . . . But 2020 was no normal year.

America is still recovering from the worst economic shock in living memory. [Our gross domestic product] shrank [by] a record 31.4% on an annualized basis in the second quarter. . . . [I]t came screaming back at a 33.4% annualized pace in the third quarter, [but] that wasn't . . . enough to make up for the damage [that was] already done.

I ask unanimous consent that this article be printed in the RECORD with my statement.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From CNN, Jan. 27, 2021]

#### DONALD TRUMP'S FINAL ECONOMIC REPORT CARD COULD BE VERY UNDERWHELMING

(By Anneken Tappe)

NEW YORK—Economists are grading on a curve. That's not a good thing if you're former President Donald Trump.

US gross domestic product, the broadest measure of economic activity, is forecast to have grown at an annualized rate of 4% between October and December.

In a normal year, that would be something to celebrate—an A+ for Trump's final economic report card. But 2020 was no normal year.

America is still recovering from the worst economic shock in living memory. GDP shrank a record 31.4% on an annualized basis in the second quarter. Though it came screaming back at a record 33.4% annualized pace in the third quarter, that wasn't nearly enough to make up for the damage already done.

So if 33.4% isn't good enough, 4% sure ain't gonna cut it, either. It would get the nation only a small part of the way back to its pre-pandemic strength—underscoring just how far we still have to go.

It also doesn't bode well for the recovery in 2021. The US economy's recovery took a hit in the last quarter of 2020 as Covid-19 infections spiked and various states reintroduced lockdown measures.

A BAD SIGN FOR 2021

President Joe Biden inherited an ailing recovery and a broken jobs market. The new

administration will need an all-hands-on-deck approach to get the economy back on track this year after the pandemic slammed on the breaks.

Rising infections and renewed restrictions on people and businesses put a damper on hopes for the recovery in the winter months.

The first quarter of 2021 "is likely to be even weaker with little reason to expect a sudden upswing in activity until Covid restrictions are meaningfully eased," said James Knightley, chief international economist at ING, even with more help for the unemployed in place.

Biden will need to bring the pandemic under control first to get the recovery on the right path.

#### WHAT'S HOLDING THE ECONOMY BACK?

Economists have been concerned about the state of the recovery for a while. Rising infections in the fall and a renewed increase in weekly claims for jobless benefits pointed to another rough patch for the economy in the winter.

On the consumer and spending front, retail sales logged three straight months without any growth between October and December as big shopping events like Black Friday and Christmas failed to provide an adequate boost. And the University of Michigan's survey-based consumer sentiment index remained still far below its pre-pandemic level and declined again after its most recent peak in October.

Millions of Americans remain unemployed because of the crisis, and in December, the economy shed 140,000 jobs—a major setback for the recovery. It was the first net job loss since April.

The US economy runs on consumer spending and for as long as Americans don't spend the way they used to—be it because of unemployment, lockdowns or plain caution—it will keep the recovery pace slow.

The rollout of vaccines and ultimate control of the virus is what will truly transport the economy back to its pre-pandemic strength, economists believe. But only about 23.5 million vaccine doses have been administered in the United States so far.

Meanwhile, those who lost their jobs or had their hours or pay reduced because of the pandemic still require help from the government.

Trump signed a second stimulus package into law in December, which extended various programs to continue helping the jobless. But many economists believe the delay in getting more measures passed hurt the pace of the recovery.

President Biden's economic agenda includes more stimulus still, but whether his \$1.9 trillion plan will get passed in its original form remains to be seen.

Mr. DURBIN. The statistics are devastating, as well, when it comes to the number of people filing for unemployment—recordbreaking numbers—and those are included in this article as well.

So we are counseled by the new Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, approved by this body, that we shouldn't take our foot off the accelerator for fear that this economy will bog down again. Businesses will find it difficult to survive—even open—and their employees, of course, will be without work. We need to get this economy roaring back, and that means making the investment that President Biden is asking for.

Similarly, we need to get our kids back in school. I know most parents would feel that is true, grandparents as

well. And the sooner we do it, the better, but do it safely—safely for the teachers, administrators, and everyone involved in that decision.

It is hard to imagine what we have been through in the last calendar year, the year 2020. I am glad it is behind us.

We will still have many challenges ahead, but it is hard to believe that just 1 year ago this week, in the State of Illinois, we confirmed our first case of coronavirus—1 year ago. A patient had returned from China to suburban Chicago and transmitted the virus to her husband. She was treated successfully, as was her husband.

But in the 365 days since then that transpired, 1.1 million COVID-19 cases occurred in my State of Illinois—from one person a year ago, 1.1 million cases—and almost 19,000 Illinoisans have died. The story is repeated in every State and every community. What started as a worry ended up becoming a pandemic and one of the deadliest in American history.

Last year, I came to the floor to ask unanimous consent for a resolution with a simple message, that the United States should work with other nations around the world to address the COVID-19 pandemic. It seemed like a commonsense proposition. To think that one case in Wuhan, China, has led us to where we are today tells us that this is a shrinking world.

We need to tackle that deadly communicable disease because it knows no boundaries. No nation is safe from COVID-19 if it is raging in any part of the world. Equally, no nation's economy is immune from the impacts of the pandemic raging elsewhere.

I am glad the Senate eventually passed the resolution that I introduced, affirming the need to join with others in fighting the pandemic.

Now, the first priority is obvious: Take care of the American people and American families and everyone who lives in our Nation. That is the first and highest priority for our elected officials at every single level.

We are now debating a measure to help the American people gain access to vaccines—the Biden rescue plan—and the harsh economic impact it has had on America. President Biden understands the immediacy of these needs, and I hope that we in Congress do as well.

As we respond to the COVID-19 crisis in America, though, we cannot ignore the need for a global response. This isn't a matter of being charitable. It is in our national interest and a reflection of our values to ensure that poorer nations have access to vaccines and tools to manage their impact.

The New York Times columnist Nick Kristof chronicled this problem in a powerful piece earlier this month, entitled "Starving Children Don't Cry." He noted that while some developing countries may have avoided high COVID death tolls, the pandemic has led, in many places, to what he calls "pandemics of hunger, disease and il-

literacy." Day laborers can't find work. Campaigns to address malaria, polio, AIDS, and malnutrition have been disrupted. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of children in the developing world will die from malnutrition. Many who survive will face lifetimes of disabilities.

A study by the International Chamber of Commerce found that the global cost of unequal global vaccine distribution will hit affluent countries almost as hard as developing countries.

The study showed what would happen if wealthy nations were fully vaccinated by the middle of the year but poor countries shut out, a likely scenario.

This week, the World Health Organization noted that only 1 of 29 low-income countries has begun vaccination, and in that particular country of Guinea, only 55 out of 12 million people have been reached.

The study concluded that the global economy could lose more than \$9 trillion, with nearly half of those costs absorbed by the United States and other wealthy countries.

We are already seeing how illness in poor nations affects us. U.S. exports have plunged by nearly 28 percent in the last 6 months, resulting in lost jobs here, lower profits, and lower wages.

So that is why I am reintroducing legislation to direct the U.S. Treasury to use its vote at the International Monetary Fund to release what are known as special drawing rights. These are foreign exchange reserve assets maintained by the IMF that can be used by developing nations during severe economic downturns, as done during the 2008 global financial crisis.

A release of these special drawing rights would not cost American taxpayers a single dollar, but they would help developing nations purchase and distribute COVID vaccines and stem the pandemic's economic impact overseas.

This proposal is supported by a broad coalition, including American farm leaders, business leaders, and trade associations, leading economists, faith groups, labor unions, and humanitarian groups.

I want to thank my cosponsors in this effort: Senators SANDERS, CARDIN, REED, MERKLEY, and LEAHY. We are joined in the House by my colleague from Illinois, Congressman CHUY GARCÍA.

Three-quarters of a century ago, much of the world lay in ruins as a result of a global war. The United States made an unprecedented commitment to help the nations of the world rise from the ashes of World War II and rebuild. We did so because it was in keeping with our moral beliefs and it served our political and economic interests.

The Marshall Plan and other international aid efforts by the United States helped make America the most powerful Nation on Earth, politically and economically. This global crisis, COVID-19, gives us another oppor-

tunity to strengthen America as we help repair a damaged world.

Of course, our first priority is American families, and this effort would not take a single dollar away from buying the vaccines that are necessary to keep our Nation safe. But by using these special drawing rights, we provide resources to some of the poorest nations around the world so that they, too, can start vaccinating their population.

This world got sick, we believe, because of one person in China, and it spread around the world. That is, at least, the theory that has been backed up by evidence so far. So let's make certain that, as we address this issue, we do it on a global basis.

I urge the Senate to support this measure as a way to not only do the right thing for our less fortunate brothers and sisters around the world but as a way to help our own pandemic and economic recovery.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NOMINATION OF PETER PAUL MONTGOMERY BUTTIGIEG

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, yesterday I voted to advance out of committee President Biden's nomination of Pete Buttigieg as head of the Department of Transportation, and the full Senate will soon vote to confirm him.

I had a good meeting and discussion with Mr. Buttigieg last week. We talked about a number of South Dakota transportation priorities.

Our Nation is due for another major infrastructure bill, and I asked Mr. Buttigieg to commit to maintaining strong investments in rural highway funding and other rural transportation priorities as part of any infrastructure legislation. A strong rural transportation infrastructure benefits the entire national transportation system by connecting major highways and railways to the regions that produce so many of the agricultural and industrial products that we rely on. It is key to helping South Dakota farmers and ranchers and farmers and ranchers around the country get their products to market.

I also asked Mr. Buttigieg to work with me to improve Tribal transportation infrastructure. Right now, prosperous Tribes in populous areas receive a disproportionate amount of Tribal transportation funding, even though their needs are often less pressing than those facing large rural Tribes, like those in South Dakota. I am committed to ensuring that rural Tribes get their fair share of Tribal transportation funding, and I was pleased that